



The
National Intelligence
Daily

Published by the Director of Central Intelligence for Named Principals Only

~~TOP SECRET~~

Copy No. 18

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7, 1976

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 32

3.5(c)

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Military Moves Closer to Coup Against Peron

Recent events in Argentina suggest that the military is getting in a position to take over the government, but there is no firm evidence that they have made a decision to move yet. Reported discussions in the high command no longer focus on whether a coup is necessary or feasible, but on how and when it should be undertaken.

Navy commander Admiral Massera and army commander General Videla reportedly are considering specific courses of action to follow in the event of a coup.

Massera, who says it is a foregone conclusion that the armed forces will remove Peron, has ordered naval intelligence to prepare lists of prominent persons to be arrested following a takeover. The list would concentrate on prominent citizens suspected of subversion or other illegal activities.

Videla is said to have commented that if there were a coup, the three service chiefs would probably join in forming a government. Videla also reportedly commented that sympathetic civilian advisers have provided plans for after a coup.

Several recent developments could help pave the way for an armed forces move against Peron. One is the appointment of a general long a coup advocate as army chief in Buenos Aires Province. Another proponent of a military takeover has been named head of the federal police, which would have an important role to play in countering reaction to a coup by militant Peronist civilians.

Officers looking for a pretext to move against Peron are obviously keeping an eye on indications that workers, long one of her mainstays, and businessmen are growing more disenchanted with her administration. The more eager military advocates of a coup may hope this trend may produce the public repudiation of Peron that some officers feel they need before moving.